

Apparition Poems

Adam Fieled

Apologia

Though no sustained narrative buoys it up, *Apparition Poems* is meant to be sprawling, and epic. An American epic, even one legitimate on world levels, could only be one made up of disparate, seemingly irreconcilable parts— such a state of affairs being America's, too. The strains which chafe and collide in *Apparition Poems* are discrete— love poems, carnal poems, meta-poems, philosophical poems, etc. Forced to cohabit, they make a clang and a roar together (or, as Whitman would have it, a “barbaric yawp”) which creates a permanent (for the duration of the epic) sense of dislocation, disorientation, and discomfort. This is enhanced by the nuances of individual poems, which are often shaped in the dialect of multiple meanings and insinuation. Almost every linguistic sign in *Apparition Poems* is bifurcated; either by the context of its relationship to other linguistic signs in the poems, or by its relationship to the epic whole of the book itself. If *Apparition Poems* is an epic, it is an epic of language; the combative adventure of multiple meanings, shifting contexts and perspectives, and the ultimate despair of the incommensurability of artful utterance with practical life in an era of material and spiritual decline. It is significant that the poems are numbered rather than named; it emphasizes the fragmentary (or apparitional) nature of each, its place in a kind of mosaic, rather than a series of wholes welded together by chance or arbitrary willfulness (as is *de rigueur* for poetry texts).

This is the dichotomy of *Apparition Poems*— epics, in the classical sense, are meant to represent continuous, cohesive action— narrative continuity is essential. *Apparition Poems* is an epic in fragments— every poem drops us, in medias res, into a new narrative. If I choose to call *Apparition Poems* an epic, not in the classical (or Miltonic) sense but in a newfangled, American mode (which nonetheless maintains some classical conventions), it is because the fragments together create a magnitude of scope which can comfortably be called epic. The action represented in the poems ranges from the sublime to the ridiculous, from the heroic to the anti-heroic; there are dramatic monologues set amidst the other forms, so that the book never strays too far from direct and directly represented humanism and humanistic endeavor. The American character is peevish if not able to compete— so are the characters here. Life degenerates into a contest and a quest for victory, even in peaceful or solitary contexts. Yet, if the indigenous landscape is strange and surrealistic, it is difficult to maintain straightforward competitive attitudes— consciousness has to adjust while competing, creating a quandary away from the brazen singularity which has defined successful, militaristic America in the world.

Suddenly, American consciousness is beleaguered by shifting sands and multiple meanings— an inability, not only to be singular but to perceive singular meanings. Even as multiplications are resisted, everything multiplies, and often into profit loss, rather than profit gain. The epic, fragmentary narrative of *Apparition Poems* is a down-bound, tragic one, rather than a story of valor or heroism. The consolation for loss of material consonance is a more realistic vision of the world and of human life— as a site of/for dynamism, rather than stasis, of/for multiplicity, rather than singularity. *Apparition Poems* is a vista into “multiple America” from Philadelphia, its birth-place, and a city beleaguered also by multiple visions of itself. No city in America has so much historical heft; nor did any American city suffer so harsh a demotion in the brutally materialistic twentieth century. Yet, as *Apparition Poems* suggests, if a new America is to manifest in the twenty-first century, it might as well begin in Philadelphia. If the epic focuses on loss followed by more loss, rather than eventual,

fulsome triumph, then so be it. And if Apparition Poems as fragmentary epic imposes a lesson, it is this— the pursuit of singularity in human life is a fool’s game; the truth is almost always, and triumphantly, multiple.

Adam Fieled, 2013

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With twelve years hindsight, and with a sense of affection for the text, combined with an acknowledgement that I am partly being arch, it seems to me that Apparition Poems has established itself as a *less-than-wholesome* book. The sense, in the text, of both perversity and perversion in a generalized sense, creating textual angles meant to cut or incise rather than (as is more usual in America) to caress, make an approach to this text after all these years what could, possibly, be considered superfluous. The problem with an abrupt dismissal, and it is a *less-than-wholesome* problem, is the recourse the book has to philosophy and philosophical thought, still within the bounds of the aestheticized, as a reaching or attempted journey beyond perversion, or into perversion transcendentalized again into allegory, loaded metaphor, and formal reinvention. Once poetry here has attempted intercourse with the higher frequencies of discursive thought, we deduce that an interrogation is necessary as to whether this intercourse is possible, in a real way, at all. To answer this query, it must first also be interrogated, even into more open air than we might like, what intercourse is possible between poetry and philosophy; further investigating, when we understand what the possibilities are, whether this form or manner or intercourse is desirable or not.

The apparition which haunts the book: a sense of depth and solidity, held within an individual consciousness; a sense of wholesomeness; leads the protagonist beyond the landscape of the carnal, and of jejune inquiries into language, which fall short of achieving more intellectually than stylization or stylized modes of disjuncture and deconstruction. The only oxygen which reaches him, which can propel the shards of a decimated consciousness into at least an *imagination* of wholesomeness, is that supplied by a desperate surrender to discourses aimed higher than aestheticized language is designed to reach, and at the conditions and terms the aesthetic generally offer. The image arises of a Don Quixote figure, pacing the streets of Center City Philadelphia in the middle of the night. In the state of perversity, perversion, and the less-than-wholesome within which the book was written; a trance of sorts; it never occurred to the author that a reliance on the aesthetic, and on stylization in general, could give way to limpidity if control was relinquished into those more limpid discursive spaces. Rather, bifurcating the philosophical so that it could also fulfill the terms of the aesthetic, and of stylization, seemed a viable tactic towards giving vent to that sense of the fragmented, the jagged, the incisively sharp, which animated his consciousness.

Philosophy, and philosophical discourse, aims, at its highest pitch, for the most objective kind of truth. Language becomes a conduit for vistas opened, meant to answer questions that cannot be answered by the quantifications of scientists— the being of beings, the precise nature of human consciousness itself. The poet’s aim is more about a sophisticated form of entertainment— language as a conduit for the pursuit of sumptuousness, imagination strained to make things, or things-of-the-world, transitive to other things (metaphor), along with a lower, compromised version of objectivity, functioning in harmonious balance with imperatives to imagination and *melopoeia*. The real intercourse possible between philosophy and poetry is thus a borrowing, by poetry, of a more objective lens with which to view poetry’s traditional objects— eros, affectivity, metaphoric creativity.

What philosophy can take back, in its turn, is a something intermittently useful to the philosopher and his discourses— a sense enjoyment or playfulness in a lower mode of discourse— waters warmer, if less ultimately nourishing, to splash around in.

The assignation of desirability or not desirability to this congeries of circumstances manifests a sense of ambiguity, which can only be answered by individuals forced to confront it. If I continue to affix my own assignation of *less-than-wholesome* to Apparition Poems, it is because the point at which philosophy appears in the book has a hinge to a less-than-traditional poetry aesthetic, which substitutes rancor, discord, and semantic/syntactic explosiveness, in several directions, for sumptuousness, and metaphors constructed and perpetuated in a textual Theater of Cruelty, to borrow from Artaud, all of which push against the bounds of what might be considered entertaining, for poetry's conventional pursuits. What entertainment could then be derived from Apparition Poems, would be the emergence of philosophy, as an objective antidote to a subjectivity jaundiced by immersion in a jungle of overly sharp, hostile metaphors— thus alienated from the wholesomeness of the conventionally aesthetic.

As an individual, confronting a text, it may be acknowledged or unacknowledged that Apparition Poems creates new waters for higher discourses to play around in— play, here, being a function of metaphors-as-toys, aesthetic landscapes as stomping grounds, idiosyncratic syndromes as vehicles of possible universalization. The book, in other words, cannot cure itself, make itself wholesome— though, through its sense of reaching for philosophy, it tries— but philosophy itself, engaging in a mode of investigation here (ransacking the Theater of Cruelty for points of interest) can do for the book, what the book cannot do for itself. If all these things happen amidst an ambiance of mischief, of willing transgression, so much the better.

Adam Fieled, 2022

Credits

As/Is— 534, 2054, 1088

blue & yellow dog— 1249, 1261, 1339

Cricket Online Review— 1558, 1571, 218, 219

Denver Syntax— 1343, 1473, 1497

Diode— 1089, 220, 221, 222

Great Works— 1065, 1066, 1067, 1068, 1069, 1070

Jacket— 1345, 1476, 1480

Listenlight— 1511, 1514, 1516

moria— 1519, 1520, 1524, 1529

Otoliths— 1549, 1580

PennSound— 1067, 1121, 1145, 1223, 1241, 1288, 1316, 1327, 1335, 1345, 1476, 1480, 1488, 1509, 1511, 1512, 1514, 1520, 1529, 1536, 1546, 1552, 1562, 1576, 1584, 1602, 1603, 1607, 1613, 1627, 1645, 1651, 506, 508, 521, 522, 524, 533, 545, 552, 555, 564, 562, 565, 567

PFS Post— 1613, 1645

Pirene's Fountain— 536, 1518

Stoning the Devil— 1103, 1134, 1145, 1168, 1241, 1281, 1288, 1313, 1330, 1335, 1488, 1491, 1533, 1536, 1538, 1562, 1573, 1574, 1576, 1638, 1642, 1645, 1646, 1647

Tears in the Fence— 1083, 1084, 1085, 1901, 1913

The Argotist— 1323, 1326, 1327, 1328

The Helios Mss— 2107

13 Myna Birds— 1080

Trunk of Delirium— 528

Tyger Burning— 1550, 1553

#1065

Black-shirted,
bright eyes in
dream-blues,
parents dead
of a car crash,
I kissed her so
long I felt as if
I would crash,
South Street
loud around
us, lips soft—

#1066

A patch of white light
appeared on my wall
late last night. It was
no shadow.

I thought
it might be a cross, I
thought it might be a
sign, but by the time
I turned my head, it
was gone.

I thought

#1067

I want to last—
to be the last
of the last of
the last to be

taken by time,
but the thing
about time is
that it wants,

what it wants
is us, all of us
wane quickly
for all time's

ways, sans "I,"
what I wants—

#1069

There comes a time
history's viability in
impressing us goes

out our mind's eye,
we are ghosts then,
we join the "rest of,"

until someone's lips
hips us to secrets, in
case we forgot, that

nothing ever happed,
nothing ever got writ.

#1070

I said, "I can't
even remember
the last time I
was excited, how
can I associate
ideas?"

She pulled
out a gun, a tube
of oil, and an air
cushion,

and it was
a spontaneous
overflow,

powerfully
felt, in which we
reaped together—

#1080

If I had Neko Case
for one night, I'd
dip her red hair in
red wine, suck it
dry, bathe
her in
honey,
dive
into what's
pink and blue,
roll out the red carpet.

If I had Neko Case
for one night, I'd
part the Red Sea
to make her
come, come
pangs,
needles,
she's
stiff from
ecstasy, I'm
freckle-fucked.

If I had Neko Case
I would never
leave my bed
again; I'd lay,
awake to
music,
voices,
ether,
never doubt
Heaven exists
on Earth, between
throats, notes, legs.

#1083

Is art slightly less
stupid than every-
thing else?

 I am more
 moved by
 flesh, and
 stupidly,
how easily
some skin
peels off
 layers of text—
“company of blood,”
Lucy on a bed
 with diamonds—

#1547

I.
this is
what
words
amount
to—
festivals
of ash,
collapsed
into urns,
held
up by
timid folk
for the
bold to
scatter.

II.
Poems are train-wrecks
 that move— to stand
on tracks, to do so solidly, is
 suicide of a high order—

to die by force of wreckage—

#1085

Metaphysics of Facebook—
how many pictures can one
woman upload?

 She sits on a
shag carpet, or, in a leotard,
dances, or drinks a beer, arm
around a disheveled mate—
 all possible selves
 captured for Net
 priceless and free
 discrete but not—

#1089

I love you,
I love you,
I love you—

clouds are
moving in
behind us,

storms are
forming in
front, blue

sky purple,
green grass
yellow, all

things pale
to this dark—

#1103

As a child, I
reached up,
towards my
Mother; as

a man, as I
reach, I am
deep down
in earth, or

I reach out
to find air,
nothing to
mother me,

emptiness,
soot & ash.

#1117

Sometimes you write
from ocean's bottom,
blue waters bury you,

an octopus comes to
give you ink, tentacle
words, fortitude for

battles to get back on
the surface, where you
must fight to get past

jellyfish blocks, tears—

#1121

How I wanted her!
Everything pointed
me into her—
 gossamer silk
 over her belly
 black panties
 head turned
 towards me—
I nailed her to my wall,
I nailed her—

she never forgave me

#1134

It is by dint of great labor
that lines heap up on one
another (enjambéd or not),

it is by dint of great labor
that they take on the cast,
die, substance that sticks,

it is by dint of great labor
that poets must forget this,
because to stick means not

to stick, it means to loosen
perpetually out of grooves,
let things topple into place,

let shapes manifest slowly,
let life meander, be rolling—

#1145

The Tower of Verse
is a Babel, no one pays
their rent, many leap
from windows to sure
death, many leave, yet
there is a strange sense
of satisfaction given to
those who stay, and it
is merely this—

clean windows
allow us to see
wisps of smoke,
(grey, red, turbid)
rise from ashes—

#1148

September sunlight,

elegiac as collapsed
ruins, festival ashes,

nooks where hidden
lovers laid, tasting

wine on one another's
breath, piercing silk

layers, springing up,
ruddy, fulsome, like

little flesh harvests—

#1155

September leaves hang on—

loads about to be blown
into black concrete wombs

fretted by windy displacements

#1168

The essential philosophical question
is incredibly stupid—
why is it that things happen? You can
ask a thousand times,
it won't matter— nothing does, except
these things that
keep happening, “around” philosophy.

#1180

I went with her on
a daytrip inside her
head; there were kids'
toys, storybooks, red
monsters, fire trucks,
silver streaks, stairs,
rooms everywhere, it
was a funhouse, but
in each mirror she
looked different, and
I couldn't see myself—

#1209

Poems with “I” and “she”
are older than the galaxy,
have power to rivet me,
because there is no “I”
for me without a “she,”
even if I feminize this
highly vaginal computer
screen, my seminal hands—

#1223

She was seated at a desk,
giving a dramatic speech
(pronounced with acidic
bitterness), glaring at me,
I was punching a telephone,
trying to reach Dominique
who had given me a phony
number, while two young,
androgynous sprites made
love in a chair, Leonard
joined my committee—

she was seated at a desk,
her voice rose to a pitch I
couldn't tolerate, but also
it brought me to the verge
of orgasm, because she was
sucking myself out of me,
doing it psychically, when I
woke up, she was updating
her Face about lost sleep—

#1241

Why does no one tell the truth?
Because the truth is (more often
than not) absurd. No one wants
to look absurd, so no one tells
the truth, which creates even
more absurdity; worlds grow
into self-parody, systems grow
down into gutters, whole epochs
are wasted in perfidy; Cassandra
finally opens her mouth, no one
listens, they want her to star in
a porno, set her up with a stage-
name, she learns not to rant,
visions cloud her eyes, cunt—

#1249

Despite what I write, there's
not much sex in the world—
walk down Walnut Street,
take an inventory— how
much sex are these people
getting? This one fat, this
one ugly, this one old, this
one a baby, a couple married
twenty years, or ten, or five—
not much sex in these lives.
But media, movies thrive
on representing this tiny
demographic: single, young,
promiscuous. Crowds come.

#1261

If I were a rock star, I'd
take a flight to Singapore,
hoist you up to "Imperial
Suite" in a swank hotel,
turn on a Jacuzzi, order
up some caviar (which I
don't even like, but no
matter), we'd take our
clothes off, conceive a
child right there, which
we'd raise from Imperial
Suite, and my World Tour
would begin right there,
would go on forever—

#1281

You can take for granted
lots of God-awful garbage
in places deemed important
by fools; this goes for every
thing, including poetry. Why?
Because the world runs (has,
will always) on mediocrity, so
safe, so comforting, like a mug
of hot cocoa on a winter's night,
or a mediocre simile, people want
others to be mediocre, to be fools,
that's just the way things go, people
are nothing to write home about, or
(if you are writing to God) nothing to
write about at all, the world is no mystery,
all the mystery is in the night sky, looking up.

#717

I.

On why it has to be that writing
comfortable garbage is the inevitable
byproduct of living comfortably, with
each fresh hell I wonder why the hooks
towards artful utterance are set this
way, & why I must become such an oyster
just to confer into a leaking bucket,
insecurely hung from abraded cables,
a blue droplet not even of blood but
of nectar, or wine, or whiskey—

II.

Times you get bored
with the process, but

worse are times when
words are little deaths,

wrung out like sheets,
draped over hangers,

out in a damp yard on
a cold autumn day, as

wind rises to pin them
to your hopeless breast.

#1303

Philly: I duck punches,
land them from a pink-
flesh moon. Fists don't
know me, hung like an
Exit sign. This city hell
I write against, windows
shuttered up, visionary
deadness, decayed tufts,
I'll ride it out in needles
poised on waves, poison
apples bitten into like so
many razors in disguise,
silver. Tumble into light
shafts, ratty entrances out.

#1307

She hovers above planet
Earth, making strategies
for safe landings, but not
able to see that she is also
on planet Earth, watched
like a crazed cat, a maze-
rat, or a tied-up mime, I
cannot save someone so
high up or far down, it's
like a black thread about
to snap, as it strains past
breaking point she reaches
for champagne, to celebrate—
bubbles lunge up to break.

#1313

we can't stop trying to conceive,
even though our bodies are dead
to each other, and nightly deaths
I took for granted are razors in a
 part of my flesh that
 can never live again—
certain possessions possess us.

#1316

Hunters get smitten with their prey,
but to kill is such an amazing rush
who could possibly resist, I'm into
these thoughts because you dazzle
me away from words into your red
pulpy depths, which I resent, but I
can do nothing about, because you
have nails in your cunt and crucifix
in your mouth, when I come I'm a
perfect personal Jesus, but the gash
is all yours, did I mention I love you?

#1326

Before the sun rises,
streets in Philly have
this sheen, different
than at midnight, as
the nascent day holds
back its presence, but
makes itself felt in air
like breathable crystal—
 no one can tell me
 I'm not living my
 life to the full.

#1327

She said, you want Sister
Lovers, you son of a bitch,
pouted on a beige couch in
Plastic City, I said, I want
Sister Lovers, but I'm not
a son of a bitch, and I can
prove it (I drooled slightly),
took it out and we made
such spectacular love that
the couch turned blue from
our intensity, but I had to
wear a mask because I'd
been warned that this girl
was, herself, a son of a bitch—

#1328

The girl on the trolley
had pitch black hair,
eyes to match, I got
her vibes instantly—
 so, what do we
 want to do? Do
 we want to do
 this? Is it OK?
took her back here
took her clothes off
took her not gently
 I'll never take the 34 again—

#1330

When the sky brightens slightly
into navy blue, “what’s the use”
says the empty street to parking
lots elevated four stories above.

#1335

terse as this is, it is
given to us in bits
carelessly shorn
from rocky slopes,
of this I can only
say nothing comes
with things built in,
it's always sharp edges,
crevices, crags, precipice,
abrupt plunges into "wants,"
what subsists between us
happens in canyons lined
in blue waters where this
slides down to a dense
bottom, I can't retrieve
you twice in the same
way, it must be terse
because real is terse,
tense because it's so
frail, pine cones held
in a child's hand, snapped.

#1339

house with ivy
wooden door,
yellow kitchen,
clunky dresser
on which she displayed all
kinds of tricks, nights were
young, strong, climactic in
this place, sex,
green buds, all
this here, I'm a
kid, as a man, I
look at this, can't sense
much who I was, why I
ended this, if it is an end—

#1340

Arms folded over chest
(as the man on the four of
Swords), she paints inside
a box-like carven space,
(dank edges only seen on
the outside), light filters in
from small square windows,
I hover over her, I'm this
that she wants, but what
she needs is to once again
feel what avalanches can't
reach this head so full of
color, ribbons, blueness.

#1341

Secrets whispered behind us
have a cheapness to bind us
to liquors, but may blind us
to possibilities of what deep
secrets are lost in pursuit of
an ultimate drunkenness that
reflects off surfaces like dead
fishes at the bottom of filthy
rivers— what goes up most is
just the imperviousness gained
by walking down streets, tipsy,
which I did as I said this to her,
over the Schuylkill, two fishes.

#1342

What's in what eyes?
What I see in hers is
mixed greenish silence,
somewhat garish, it's
past girlish (not much),
but I can't touch her
flesh (set to self-destruct),
anymore than she can
understand the book
her cunt is, that no one
reads directly, or speaks
of, there's no love other
than "could be," but I
think of her throat cut—
that's her slice of smut.

#1343

This process of leaping
happens between lines,
like a fish that baits its
own hooks; heights in
depth, depths of height,
all colliding in a mesh of
net cast only for a fish to
bring it down on itself, so
that others swim out past—
I don't mean myself in this.

#1345

Two hedgerows with a little path
between— to walk in the path like
some do, as if no other viable route
exists, to make Gods of hedgerows
that make your life tiny, is a sin of
some significance in a world where
hedgerows can be approached from
any side— I said this to a man who
bore seeds to an open space, and he
nodded to someone else and whistled
an old waltz to himself in annoyance.

#1470

I leaned out into the breeze (no
cars impinging on any side), did
not spit but let myself be blown
back, knowing that vistas opened
when I did so, appreciating what
was infinite in this small moment,
an old song on the radio, a breeze,
a moving car (me at the wheel), all
simple, succinct, clear, crisp, cutting,
what blood came out was nourished
by the open air, came back in again.

#1473

Passages that shudder between
blackness between legs between
what moves (taps head) between
us like this (taps head again) hints
she may not be the animal bride I'm
looking for (by this I mean seed carrier,
not the same as mother-for-kids, almost),
what's between what used to be between

us, what now is, is between her, others who
have more claim to be animal brides, but she's
here, that's the key, here now, actually, which may
be all that matters, if to matter is to lie back, legs
apart, between being, becoming, moving, removing
all barriers, fences, boundaries, expenses to move again.

#1476

Days follow days off cliffs—
do these things we do have
any resonance, do they rise
into the ether, or are they to
be ground down into pulp,
briefly making earth sodden,
then dissipated dust scattered
over plains too vast, blasted
with winds, rains, storms, to
be counted or harvested?

#1480

How horrendous, to realize there
are people in the world with no
soul, walking zeros, hollow spaces,
dead end interiors, permanently
frozen faculties, how horrendous
to watch how they borrow words
of others to sound profound, but
each echo reveals there's nothing
behind it but the kind of charred
silence that comes after a corpse
is burnt— how horrendous, how
it makes some of us cling to what
we feel, how we feel, that we feel,
and that everything we feel is so
precious, specifically (and only)
because it is felt, and stays felt.

#1488

liquor store, linoleum
floor, wine she chose
 was always deep red,
 dark, bitter aftertaste,
 unlike her bare torso,
 which has in it
 all that ever was
 of drunkenness—
to miss someone terribly,
to both still be in love, as
she severs things because
 she thinks she must—
 exquisite torture, it's
 a different bare torso,
(my own) that's incarnadine—

#1491

To wake up in frost,
ineffectual sun up in
blue sky bruised gray,
is to huddle into these
words, burrow down in
them until you hit a spot
of warmth, like memories
stuck like bark to roots,
of this or that, of she or
her, if this trope is over-
worn so be it, I've had
enough of pretending
this crux isn't one, so
I'll lean into it, again—

#1497

nothingness grows vast,
nothingness tastes sweet
only for ten seconds— of

this, depth without depth,
crass substitute for realms
of total glory she effaces

(once spilled milk cries)
like a chalk-stain on blue
jeans, a just-smoked joint.

#1506

New Years Day—

sky is same as its
been, perched in
perfect beauty in
search of a better
place (power lines
cut it off), it hurts
to know all other
places exist than
this, visionary as

this deadness is.

#1507

The importance of elsewhere,
Larkin wrote, but didn't name
money as the reason for none
(no elsewhere), iron brutalities
forge fences around my words—

these buildings are neuroses, I
can't see them without a desire
to take pills, drinks, anything to
free me from ugly hegemonies—

#1509

Myths are made of us, we
who spin myths from this
happenstance life, which is
hewn of rocks, books, lies,
truths, loves, hangings of
all these things, in myths
we are heroes, braggarts,
martyrs, rogues, angels,
murderers and assholes,
but myths go on sans us,
who only wanted slightly
more than Gods gave us,
& so made ourselves Gods,
bugger any odds against us.

#1510

Sky of mud, what we
have placed in you is
much more rank than
any rapist ever put in
prone woman— like
a race of rapists, we
have prowled earth in
search of womb-like
comforts, sent vapors
into ether just to get
someplace sans loss
of time, expense; for
us, no defense, death—
as rapists, caged, gored.

#1511

steps up to my flat, on
which we sat, tongues
flailed like fins, on sea
of you, not me, but we
thought (or I thought)
there'd be reprieve in
between yours, for us
to combine, you were
terribly vicious, this is
our end (here, amidst
I and I), does she even
remember this, obscure
island, lost in Atlantis?

#1512

Do you
know I

tried to
reach, I

did, but
you're a

far away
planet, I

can't, its
rings all

around, I
can't see

surface, I
want to,

can you
change

orbits
for me

once?

#1514

You can't
get it when
you want it,
but when I
want it I get
it; she rolled
over on her
belly, which
was very full,
and slept; its
just shadows
on the wall, I
thought, dark.

#1516

I climb over
you, onto me,
but me is not
the "I" I want

it to be, climb
down, rafters
heave, wood
slats, fences,

all this is you,
already over
& beyond, is
this fairness?

#1519

She says she
wants babies

from me, she
sends this to

me, nudging
my body in a

straight line I
recognize for

its blue streak,
I'll give her a

baby, I say, it's
part of a plan,

indecipherable—

#1520

This posse wants “success,” in
all the wrong ways— down by
the old corral, I had a shoot-out
with the leader, who gave his girl
black eyes, battered thoughts, but
she’s devoted, because she counts
“success” on the wrong fingers, I
hated to see her get trampled by a
buffalo herd— anyway, ten paces,
I nailed him right in the heart, but
wasn’t bothered, that part of him
never worked to begin with. Eat
dust, I said in parting, write about
how it tastes, you might “make it”
after all, but keep it in your mouth.

#1524

Poems: do this every day, it
becomes like roulette without
being (or seeming) Russian; if
you go here what happens, if
you move your knight onto a
new square can you take all the
pawns (at once, even, why not
be ambitious?), not everyone is
simpatico, the knights often say
they're kings, the board is clay.

#1529

I'm having a better time now,
I told her, its unfortunate that
you were happier fifteen years
ago, but you certainly had your
chance, those days we sat next
each other different places, and
of course your best friend the
idiot, Queen of Sheba, now here
you are back hot to fool around,
suddenly I call the shots, I'm a
real hot-shot, there's a shot we
might actually shoot each other,
because violence is what you want—
she unzipped her dress, frowning.

#1533

So much gets involved with
this that isn't this, that what
this is gets lost, whatever it
is, which no one knows, but
that "I" is in it somewhere
(no one knows where), there
must be a "you" (if it's art,
as it may or may not be), so
two bases are covered, like
two breasts of a mother
weaning her young, and
whether or not we are made
young by this is another good
question: we may be, maybe.

#1536

Facebook girls commit
acts of virtual adultery
every day, wanton acts
of exhibitionism, sucks
of minor stars in tiny
firmaments, I've got
them (Facebook girls),
in virtual corners in
virtual states of undress
virtually shagging my
arse off— stick it in,
like a screwdriver into
a keyboard, in & out,
in virtual light & heat.

#1542

“This art game is funny, it’s
all about staring at walls at
night, connecting blue dots
of consciousness, fitting in
pieces to your own puzzle
that may or may not be at
all comprehensible,”

I didn’t wait for him to listen
I was watching the walls

#1543

What could be more crass
than a round-trip ticket to
Los Angeles? Nothing but
beds of starlets, flawless in
perfect color harmony but
vomit stains in the toilet, I
don’t know what could be
more crass, in fact I don’t
know anything anymore, I
think the sky is marvelous.

#1546

What a tussle it was, I
could only see her eyes,
tiny bits of red above,
stark, blank blueness, I
felt animal fear between
us, but a poltergeist was
pushing our bodies into
one another, dead flesh
inhabited by spirits, for
the time nothing came
from our mouths, dead
liveliness, deep into the
wolf’s hour this went on—
our eyes couldn’t close.

#1549

Think of these in terms
of vertical movements—
what goes up or doesn't.

Does this go up? It may,
if it creates something I
feel is not "in the world"

yet, but it must also have
solid roots in the world
to be something else, it

must acknowledge what
can be called horizontal.
The best poems are zig-

zags, lightning bolts, that
go from side to side, up
at the same time. This is

a meta-bolt, but whether
it "goes" is up to you alone.

#1550

I'm in your house:
your husband, kids
not home. A voice
(yours) follows me
around, playing on
my body, until I'm
in your bathroom,
smoking butts on

a sunny spring day.
Your body doesn't
appear. It seems to
me you're suspect,
Steph, it seems to
me you want too
much. Then, you
always said I was

a dreamer. What
do we have past
dreams anyway?
What else is love?

#1552

Your name grows, as it grows
your fame grows, as it grows it
becomes clear you're not who
you are, you exist in people's
heads as something Other, I
heard this from someone at a
time when I did not exist, now
that I exist I exist as something
Other, but I can see into some
people's heads, and the "I" that
I am is amused by the "you": an
otter (might as well be), ox, fox,
dragon, dog, pig, jackal, hyena,
anything but an actual human.

#1553

I see her head, not yours,
on my pillow, dear, but I
don't really see either one
of you except as you were
when you had no interest
in my pillows: isn't it sad?

#1557

Since you are a scorpion
that stings herself to death,
after so many stings, redness
never leaves my joints, I feel
zilch. I call this *your* passionate
time, as I have no intent of
tempting the scorpion again.
I've seen nests for you all over
Philly, from Front Street right
up to Baltimore, and you know
what? You might finally get the
death you want. A sultry night,
desert all around, legs akimbo.

#1558

This is meant to be
level on level, layer
on layer, like insides
of mountains, but I
only have so many,
& when something
takes over, I drop a
little lower, my guts
drop too, and days I
could reach out for
you have gone. Well,
I call that level hell.

#1562

“In Your Eyes,” the song goes,
“the resolution of all my fruitless
searches,” only what I see in your

eyes *is* fruitless, and what Shelley
might have called “luminous green
orbs” look like turbid wastelands,

capable of ruining any day I might
have you nipping at my heels. This
is what I think about her, but don’t

dare say, she’s too young to know
anything about wastelands, I’m an
old scorpion with mud of my own.

#1563

If poetry makes nothing happen,
there is no “great political poetry
tradition,” so I yawp no “O any-
thing” to anyone who is not my
captain, and whose position is not
in any way tenable; no one (that I
know) has any excuses, we forge
ahead regardless, Nero’s fiddle is
sounding in the distance, personal
habits of Romans have entered our
lives, but I have this time to write
this and if you like it, is it enough?

#1565

Since no one
wants to eat
shit, we give
our shit to
the Earth,
it's still shit,
to eat it
means
that's what
we think
of Earth
(less than
us), Earth
is more
God to
us than
anything—
who wants
to hear
the truth
of this?

#1571

To cut right to the bone—
there is no bone in this,
it's mirrors, echoes, bits,
more than play, less than

life, but anything limiting
this needs to be chucked
like fruit rinds into a bin,
any arbitrary signifier that

knows itself to be arbitrary
can *work* as mirrors, echoes,
bits, if you have faith that
what's ineffable counts, is.

#1573

This guy thinks he knows
what's really real, writes a
book, I do the same thing:
but whoever says this is in
a chain of unreality which
reality will quickly undo: I
know whoever says this is
lost in a maze of illusions,
which must be stymied: it's
something you only say if
you're deluded; but then it
means you know you're in
a maze of delusions, which
is what's really real: a bitch.

#1574

There you are: towel-headed,
toweled, milling through large
crowds, slightly self-conscious
but convinced of your uppity
superiority— this you is me, I
push through crowds (antique
book stores, solicitous clerks, I
can't tell if they mean me when
they speak), stumble up stairs,
nobody notices the freakishness
of my appearance, as I am you—
having lived your life, I'm past
your death— cogs cut, dusted.

#1576

Who told poets to be poets?
Nobody tells anyone things
like this anymore— Poetess,
she comes to me with “this,”
it’s all wine and roses for two
nights, but I’m left dizzy— is
this the end of poetry? There’s
a war between poetry & sex, it’s
always sex’s dominance we fight,
she tells me this, but we still make
love. And it’s good & hard. I’m
pure in this, I tell myself. I know
what I’m doing. I do, too, in ways
limited by perspectives, of which
this is half of one. Is it enough?

#1577

The poets around me say
one thing repeatedly: “not
enough,” and with force I
used to not be able to take,
but what their enough is is
all pride, prejudice, lies, all
sorts of cowardice, dying
limbs, fried brains, the lot
of Satan’s syndromes, and
I (being lowly wise), stay as
low to the riverbed, listening
to sphere-music they can’t
hear, but who cares about us?

#1580

“Waiting for the heavens to fall,
what can I do with this call,” this
asinine pop song was written by
me in a dream of you where you
called me (obviously), took to be
already granted what I haven’t
given to you yet, but experience,
my love, is the only thing worth
giving, and I’ve got that from
you in spades, so when heaven
falls we’ll catch it, lay it between
our sheets, dirty as they must be—

#1582

To send bodies up into ether
(what does this no one knows)
all flesh become hands that can
clasp (ecstasy of joining things),

to be joined to a part that you
suspected evil of, but is really
only love, is to give thanks for
raised curtains which (sadly) are

doused in your own blood, & as
I join this exultant spirit, doused
in white light, I’m steeped in my
own darkness, death, excrement.

#1583

I was on Pine Street outside
the Drop, I looked, saw this
girl (maybe nineteen, twenty)
in black (not morbid black,
just normal clothes), I turned
for a split second, then when
I looked she had disappeared—
this (for once) was visionary
life, but the Drop was still
the Drop, I walked out with
the Yeah Yeah Yeahs on my
I-Pod, as I grow richer every
thing, everyone deteriorates:
I wore black the next day.

#1584

“The condition of being kidnapped
by angels: that’s what good art must
impose on a willing audience.” Who
was this guy talking to? Are we meant
to believe this Romantic bullshit? Ah,
who cares, it’ll pass. He was walking
his dog, thinking. It was a sunny day
in suburbia. The concrete really was
(and I mean this) concrete. But this
is the thing: I do believe what this
guy says, his Romantic bullshit. I
see things, you know what I mean?

#1596

I was talking to a dude
I knew from school, I
said, "I see the levels
from sleeping with
psychopaths, that's
how I get them," levels
were (I meant) places
between souls where
spaces open for metaphor,
"but when I carry them
over to my bed, every
psychopath levels me."

#1601

What words get sent up
on sharp frequencies are
fractious, bent from pain,
Hephaestus in iron-groans,
what goes up sticks around,
so that base/top get covered,

all things resonate like pitch-
forks, tweaked by conductors
before their final, triumphant
performance for a hall empty
of bodies, filled to capacity.

#1602

I stepped like a mantis off this ship
of fools, felt around for prey, found
a plate of ants to put in a microwave,
I saw how they scurried briefly, put it
into text that had the heat of ovens in
it, shipped this text across vast oceans,
it preyed on suspicions, was placed on
plates, now that I have prayed, I am (or
may be) redeemed, but every step I take
feels like a scurry, as the fools are more
numerous than I thought, just like ants.

#1603

“Be careful what you handle,”
I told her, “you can get to me
even if you touch another,” it
happened in an office shaped
like the foyer of a huge hovel,
built of mud, etchings of bugs
on the wall, perfect perverse
kids scampering among clods.

“You know what I want, and
how I can get it,” she replied,
as she took another out, put
me in, but only inside a brain
used amiss to find a level that,
shaped like a foyer, was past
office, into brick, sans mud.

#1604

Here's where shifts (red shifts)
happen in perspective, I thought,
slopping dark meat onto my plate,
here's where angles converge to
put me past the nest. General
laughter over pictures, womb-
like spaces, but I was in hers as
I was in with them. It hurts, but
he's dead, I never met him. It's
a shame, I never met him. Blood
moves through air: between her,
me, them— leaves on concrete.

#1605

This killer wears a tight
black shirt, glasses. There
are noises of digging happening
from the bathroom, she's in
bed, hands over her mouth,
frozen upset. Then, the mirror
is dug through, his face appears
in a wall with a square cut in it.
The face is there, hovers there,
just sits, it has the promise of
action that kills. This is the
tableau I watch every time
I'm in the bathroom while
she's in bed. And smile.

#1607

Every live body has a dialect:
to the extent that bodies are
in the process of effacing both
themselves, what they efface, I
move past dialect to the extent
that there are no no-brainers
here, what's moral in this is the
belief that properly used dialects
emanate waves to hold bodies
in place. As to who's saying this,
I heard this on the street last
night after a few drinks with
an ex at Dirty Frank's. It was
a bum who meant it, it worked.

#1613

Follow Abraham up the hill:
to the extent that the hill is
constituted already by kinds
of knives, to what extent can
a man go up a hill, shepherd
a son to be sacrificed, to be
worthy before an almighty
power that may or may not
have had conscious intentions

where hills, knives, sons were
concerned, but how, as I watch
this, can I not feel that Abraham,
by braving knives, does not need
the one he holds in his rapt hands?

#1617

Philosophy says that poets want to lose.
What are conditions of losing: to whom?
The conditions (to whom they concern, to

unrepresented phantoms, mostly) are colors,
which, to transcribe, require a solid core of
nebulous necromancy which philosophy calls

(for its own poetic reasons) "loss." I took this
from one strictly (which necessitated looseness
towards me) for himself, took several median

blended colors and painted a razor on the roof
of a red building. Then I fell off. But I lived.

#1620

I'm looking
at the sky, writing
like a man writes
when the sister
lives in an apartment
with a husband
three blocks away,
casts her body over
here to do what
cannot be done
ad infinitum;
and that the evil
I saw in this family
was hers, the scourge
who ruined my life.
That night I had her
in summer's sweat,
what it should've
been, what it was,
the sting of it lingers,
all in the sister, & for
once I don't dare
bifurcate myself,
they do it for me,
naturally.

#1622

Poor Schopenhauer's axioms:
all in the will is a fight to beat
other wills. I see him in his
meager room, his will bent
not to do much, save himself
the trouble of fighting these
ineluctable battles, but not
able to refrain from eating,
breathing, shitting, fucking,
all those simple acts that are
will-to-survival, but Arthur
casts himself into a future of
power, not knowing when it
arrived it was to be a crass joke,
ended with face in turtle soup.

#1625

The "I" that writes cannot be
(he told us, perched on a hill of
flowers which he crushed, but, of
course, incompletely, and not all of
them at once) strictly for-itself as it
has no substance: a student walked

up, pricked his forearm (the back side
of it) with a small razor, he cringed but
only briefly, leaning forward so that a
row of buttercups doused him yellow.
The "I" that writes has a relationship
that is very much for itself, but it has

a strictly independent existence, so that
what constitutes a human "I" has no
meaning for it. Now, you need to know
this: I was not the student with the razor,
but I supplied the razor to the student
that cut the professor's forearm, but you

will never know how I got it, or why.

#1625

I ask you this here, while I look down on you, as you look up at me, and the different ups & downs of us play themselves out, so that if, while being in this state, we are in and out of each other, all streaks of blues, grays, blacks can be edited out, and voice-overs take the place of our raw voices. Voices that I trust, cherish, but these voices are too crude that around us cast nets, so that we become crabs in and out of ourselves, so that I remark to you (you're on top now) that things that need to be asked can only be answered with skin, redness, pinkness, dots, this.

#1626

If it builds, she thinks, I'll do this, I'll get out. Is it that she's so stuck she can't move? The baby needs looking after, but, she thinks, so does her soul, and to the extent that it's not being fed, she needs a new bed somewhere. But the money isn't hers, it just isn't, and she walks the dog thinking these thoughts in loops. And this is where I intercepted her, in this alley, with the dog, with fallen traces of one who falls. That I didn't acknowledge her speaks to the places I've fallen as well.

#1627

He says that these have an “aura.”
To the extent that words on a page
can, they do. He said these things,
but then they were up on a site that
has its own aura, the poems become
composites. Whatever, I thought this,
not out loud, these auras only work
in three dimensions, and I’m already
in three dimensions, I’m already art
to begin with. Besides, who cares? I
quickly made a left onto Broad, the
radio was turned off and I opened
the window, it was a cold, breezes
danced around my face, in words.

#1628

Mrs. Trellings was in bed with her husband of
fifty summers. Now, it was winter, & the smell
of his farts, the sound of his snores, all these
things took her on a soul’s journey to Pluto, in
a deep freeze of no sleep she would linger. It’s
a story (Mrs. Trellings thought) of reverse things:
reverse providence, reverse encounter, all things
that should culminate ending in anti-climax. But
it should be noted that Mrs. Trellings was quite
intelligent, it was a week before Christmas & she
saw turkeys everywhere. They had five kids. She
thought of them, left it at that. And didn’t sleep.

#1629

This party was too much, she
was dancing, she moved away
from me, she wanted this other
guy, they danced, I sat watching
guys go into the bathroom to do
blow, I looked out at the palms,
realized we were all caught in a
net of perfect safety, circular
perfection, getting what you
want when you want it, why is
it that from Pascal to Hollywood,
perfection kills? Then he felt he
was already dead, headed for the
bathroom himself, cold & comforted.

#1638

She was eating lunch, I was watching her eat lunch, I started having all these thoughts about how people reveal themselves, even just how they eat their meals but it was such a nice day and I had a few drinks and I just kind of got lost in it all, the food was really good but there was this sense that nothing could really last, everyone has these great cars and these great lives but nothing really lasts, and I start to worry even just about eating lunch like this, isn't there something better I should be doing? Isn't there something more important than this? I don't want to get all existential about this cause it happens all the time, but I'm telling you this cause I know you have these feelings too, and it doesn't matter how we communicate as long as the basic gist of things comes through, in fact I'm kind of eating lunch right now and kind of having the same feelings, I get depressed in the afternoons here because everything is so still and perfect, so even though I have to live in this perfected state (some people say it's exalted, I don't think it's exalted, I don't even know what exalted means) it just doesn't work. I guess the lesson is that we should all skip lunch, I know it's completely absurd but it might be better just to eat breakfast and dinner, but you know, people in this town have to do certain things at certain times which is why I treasure this, but hold on a sec I just got a text from somebody, do you mind if I call you back, if not today tomorrow, I really want to hear your thoughts on this?

#1639

Look, it's not like I could've raised you any other way. The rules are the rules and you know the way this town is, I don't want to see you there sitting there sulking like you don't enjoy these things. My deal is over, I'm an old bitch whose worn out my welcome on every conceivable avenue, my tits sag, my breath stinks, the guys I have left can't get it up half the time. You have to use it, kiddo, you have to use what you've got, and if I push, it's just because the reputation you make now is going to follow you around forever, and yeah, you don't have to use eyeliner just to cross the fucking street, you don't have to wear fur to buy cigarettes, but I've given you all this shit specifically to use, and I don't necessarily mind (though I'm tempted to barge in and steal some of that cock for myself) hearing your bed-springs creaking at five in the morning cause it means you're doing good business and that's the whole point of living here, you do good business or you don't, and you'll see what it's like when you're doing this, you go straight to hell and have to live through the little cunts like yourself, but you're *my* little cunt and I'm not going to see you waste *your* little cunt while you still have all that juice running between your legs like I use to have, and this needs to become a family tradition because family is all I have left. So just keep going where you need to go, but don't complain to me about love, there is no love, there's only skin, blood, cum, spit, phlegm, & lots of it.

#1642

People need to understand that you *can* make a difference these days. Alright, so the system's trash, we make a new system. Or, if we don't, we change the system. People don't realize that there is a "we" but I've seen it with my own eyes, this really is still (no matter what anyone says) the greatest country in the world and you have to be a part of it and you have to try and change things. It's not like I condone all my own methods, but I'm a woman and you have to use what you have, and when you see these guys with their pants down (and I've seen all kinds of guys with their pants down), you really get a sense of the humanity of America and Americans and how all the threads really do tie everything together and my methods work for me, there is no judgment though some may insist on judging. You have to understand what the important judgment really is: are you an American or are you not? Do you care or do you not? Not everything I do can be as perfect as I want it to be but the important thing is, I'm building, I'm going somewhere with this. There's a place for me somewhere in this administration and I just have to find it, and I'm a determined American woman with a big heart and it's not like others don't do the things I do. There are times when I'm in the middle of these things and all I can do is visualize the American flag because it still means something, that red, white, and blue is woven into my entire body and my whole brain and everything else. The times where anyone can say *screw it* are over and done with, and it's time for the real Americans to stand up and do what needs to be done so that the red, white, and blue don't fade into the kind of blackness I see all around me in Washington. To think, I could've wasted my life.

#1645

The father's gaze (depending which gaze you happen to be referring to) is panoptic. It goes in without leaving traces. So if you have several fathers that leave no traces, &

merely invisible gazes, there is or maybe a sense in which you have no fathers. I saw all this happening to me, along with every thing else, many years ago, before I could

visualize the cell I was in, before I knew how the walls stank of fresh paint, or saw that I was getting smeared at any juncture. But, as I saw this, my father who was my

father turned, spoke down to me in such a way that I listened. I took what he said, gazed at my cell, and watched the paint dry deep into the night before I busted out to

watch the dawn break over the Delaware.

#1646

A ring of retards, she said to herself, a ring of retards. It was her turn to speak, speak she did, but she watched herself the whole time, thinking how dumb the whole thing would look to one of her old friends, in the days when she (and they) ruled the world, because the world was so tiny and they could encompass it. She gets up to piss, and notices nothing. She's still gorgeous and she knows it, that's that. Yes, I saw this happen, I was down there with them. But then, you don't know who I am, do you, and does it matter?

#1647

She told me I love boy/girl poems, love scenes in them based on a deep degeneracy inherited from too much heat around my genitals, as manifest in tangents I could only see if I was getting laid. She told me this as I was getting laid in such a way that any notion

of telling was subsumed in an ass as stately as a mansion, which I filled with the liquid cobwebs of my imagination. There was grass outside being smoked in a car in which another boy/girl scenario played out in a brunette giving a fine performance of Bolero in her movements,

and I immediately flashed back to the deep genitals of my first girlfriend and the way she used to implore God's help at certain moments, who was certainly watching this. That's it, that's the whole spiel I have on boy/girl poems and why they are hated by the dry dunces who love them.

#1649

Oh you guys, you guys are tough.
I came here to write about some
thing, but now that I came, I can't
come to a decision about what I

came for. What? You said I can't
do this? You said it's not possible
because it's a violation and not a
moving one? It's true, you guys

are tough. You know I have tried,
at different times, to please you in
little ways, but this one time I had
this student that was giving me head

and she stopped in the middle to tell
me that I had good taste and you had
bad taste, and I'll admit it, I believed
her. She was your student too, maybe

you've seen her around. She's the one
with the scarves and the jewelry and
the jewels and the courtesy to give the
teachers head who deserve it. Do you?

#1651

What's this about making moves, said
the apprentice? I've got irons in the fire
with all these pieces, isn't that enough?
To have mastered how the fire works,
so that each piece burns right down: it's
not the only move that matters, but as
I just made a line of rooks rather than
pawns, what else could possibly get my
goat? The master heard this, appearing

limber, but quite chained to the voices
that were taking away the tools he used
to put his apprentices in their places. I
have nothing to say about this, he said,
as he wiped beads of sweat from a brow
that furrowed so intensely that all his
enemies insisted he had dark ties. Just
make rows of rooks instead of pawns,
and you will find yourselves kings and

queens. They all left him that night, after
dumping the ashes in a river that ran in
back of the workshop, into a black sea.

#1654

The traces of this woman, who *is*
a woman, go all over the world, as
I don't objectify what I have no
need to objectify. Can you guess
who she is? Can you guess why I
would need to write in code so
that all the little poets don't place
me in brine vats? I heard him say
all this, and let me tell you, it was
sickening. Haven't we heard how
bodies in text are obsolescent? This
is where I jumped in, and I am the
final eye, that sees all. Black and
white impulse, red veins. Pleasures.

#506

I have seen
something
other than
what I am

it is open
as air, it is
closed to a
tee, it is a

picture of
me as me in
a movie of
me that's a

vision of me
as an "I" in
a picture of
an old movie

#507

I am is,
in saying,
like being

in woods,
like leaves,
like trees,

like a place
to rest after
you know

what I mean.

#508

O life, O time, dark dark dark
& all that, that bit, where you
confront all that won't submit,
it's nobody's favorite bit, it's
a bloody miracle we ever get
anything else, yet you never
hear talk of it except in art, &
it's gone out of fashion, right
from Milton's front page into
the dark dark dark, but it's still
dark as a mudslide, & as dense

#509

There are gusty showers
 in Philadelphia, showers
that beat up empty lots,

down in sooty Kensington,
 you could almost believe
what the books say about

being-in-the-world, I mean
 being in a damned world, it
really does seem that way

on greasy days in Philadelphia.

#1901

Conshohocken power lines in the rain—
edges of buildings cut through whitened
sky, as rising light topples privacy for
squat-dwellers on the Schuylkill— I see
power defining itself in lines, acrobatic,
space-consonant, but always working
within suburban, subaltern parameters—
eternity decayed from a rusty beneath.

#510

Whaddya know, she said,
you've coined a phrase we
can all use, just by keeping
your mouth shut, just by
whistling past the dust-bins,
hat in hand, hand in glove,
gloved from tyranny by a
left-handed smoke shifter,
a bloody miracle, she said

#511

It's all so
anxious,
this living,
panting
realizations
of what
isn't, could
never be,
sky doesn't
care, earth
doesn't care,
mud-soaked
leaves—

#512

as if I would strike you,
as if I, myself, were pushing
your face away, fists livid
against yr soft, wasp-y cheeks.
in some other world my parts
bear nectar, my hands clasp
your own like wonted shelter.
in some other dream your
eyes don't freeze but melt,
sugar cubes smashed by light.

#521

It is in the thing
that impels hands
forward, what curls
into fists, coiled
laughter, shaded
disclosures, every
inflection of every
emphatic shove of
feeling into flesh.

It is consciousness
behind, above, below
me, only me, as I
am writing an “it” that
is me, that crosses
arms in healing flame-
lit gestures, that creeps
down echoes of
creeping vines, re-
collected in affinity
with an “it” that is it,
being me.

#522

Your arms
oppress me;
my deep
exhaustion
plagues
you like
tax-forms.
Think of
waves of
honey,
tides of
butter, all
melting
into a dense,
impregnable
bind—
if this is
the lease,
I'll sign.

#524

Dressed to kill,
I go insane as I
think of killing
you in undressing,
a sense of weird
lightning bottled
inside me wells
up spontaneously,
I'm tearing at my
body's corners, I
can't stop thinking
of jumps into ether,
memorandums, just
love, whatever it
means, whatever it
is, whatever it
wants to be inside
us, a harlequin, a
moose, a daffodil,
a way of explosives
going off in a row
& corn being mowed in
Iowa, Illinois, or "I."

#528

What will the poem,
a wary protuberance,
say to admixtures of
green grassy gardens
sprung sans respite, &
hood winked dudes?
Not to implicate you,
but someone must
choose, truly, when
this linzer tart stands
eating my plate, in
spite of all spite with-
held, beyond all dreams
you can measure, near
a fracas which seems
risible. Not that I care.

#533

Lawyers I know do blow.
Every line is crass. Books
line their well-ordered flats
that look out on views that
might as well be New York.
Amped up, 13th St. gleams
like Central Park, Woody's
like a petting zoo for fruits.
I watch for lines of truth.
Tomes, philosophy— queer.
What would Marx say here?
That jobless attorneys stave
off ennui by nose-dripped
ecstasy, made a commodity?

Oh, she was really cute,
but she just doesn't get
it. I mean, she has these
perfect little blue eyes,
and our feet were almost
touching, but she kept
talking about other girls.
It didn't help that I had
to hear her whole stupid
life story about growing
up in fucking Reading.
Now she wants to open
up a shop with sex toys
and a café. I mean, that's
fine, but it was all about
her, I couldn't get a word
in edgewise, and now I
can't go into the bar where
she works because I sort
of don't want to see her.
But I'm still attracted to
her too. I swear to God,
all these fucking hick girls
come to the city and they
can't handle it. I wanted
to tell her, listen, sister,
don't mess around with
a girl that's been around.
You're cute but I could
fuck you over if I wanted
to. I've got skills that you
don't. What's the point?
She'll learn soon enough.

#535

I was fucking this girl
in the ass, late at night,
and I looked out into
the parking lot across
the street and moon-
light glistened on the
cars, I thought, that's
it, I don't give a shit
anymore, you can take
your America, shove
it up your ass just like
I'm doing here, that's
when I came, and it
was a good long one.

#536

I stood naked, a
disappeared text,
dissolved in more
text that was done
in French, smudged
lines, heart-shaped
erasures, crossings,
a witch, not such
a bluebird as she
was when I listened
to her in a bar,
stoned in Rockford,
letter stored in
her belly, tugging.

#541

Like the lamp by your bed
with no shade and the Stein
books you never read on
your shelf and the sweat
that rolls down the crack
of your ass when we fuck
(the smell of driven slush),

Like the granules these
things are or may be, as I
tell you what it is you like
about me discussing in bits
your bits that form a kind
of trinity hovering above
the places you place plants,

but it is not nor shall ever be
like anything else again, as
there is no simile for the
marks of incredibly bright
weakness around your eyes
as you lounge around in your
panties, two blues, guess which?

#542

Angie did not
arrive to white
me out— alone
in bed, 3 am, I
smoked butts,
blue lights, haze-
like, spinning, an
angel's halo— I felt
dirty, upbraided by
blueness, as if it
showed me what
I was past
entanglements,
redness in me
atrophied— I
would have been
better, I thought,
inside Angie,
butt-fucking.
That's what
was in dreams
once the haze left.

#545

Words are spirits,
words wording
through us like
savored pulp.
Words, strained
or comatose,
plucking laurel
for some lucky
fuck. Substantive
spirit words, cored &
pitted, wait to be bit
like knowledge of
good & evil, stems.
Not a cask or a flask—
some vessel from
nether regions of
Venus. Easy to be
dispirited, cored,
yet stem systems are
permanent. Say them.

#547

Spirit melts, leaving
butter particles strewn
along leaf-veined avenues—
how absurd, that it should
be in poetry, hiding there
like a cat in a dry bath-tub,
like water in a drain, like
so much dark moon.

#549

I'm conscious of freedom, how it
flares against brick, how it stirs.
Yellow backs of combatants, &
chain-gang commerce in armor,
mind-forged manacles scraped,
muscle-displays in time's diaspora.
Lastly, they turn away from facts,
look instead at trunk-scissions,
leafy morasses, all over small-
town America, steeples chased.
I'm conscious of this, of my own
yellow writing it down, seated.

#552

Guns are connected to power; you
want to shoot because you are shot,
you want to kill because you are killed,
you like nature because it happens
to be easy. Your mouth, as you kill,
is a waft of rodent-dirt, you rats. I
see myself as a kind of tree behind
all this, not that I'm solid or stolid,
just that I can absorb the prickly
twitch of your whiskered faces.
I have no problem with ferreting
out small animals. What if it turns
out they want to be elected; hope?

#553

I'd love to
enter you
this way—
go, stop,
go; go, stop,
go; until

I could fill
your canvas
w/ presence;
I'd love to
turn you
onto yourself;

you, who,
yourself, are,
spatially,
two-in-mouth,
knees-at-hip,
entered.

#555

Wood-floored bar on Rue St. Catharine—
you danced, I sat, soused as Herod,
sipped vodka tonic, endless bland
medley belting out of the jukebox—
you smiling, I occupied keeping you happy,
un-frazzled— suddenly sounds behind us,
the bar wasn't crowded & a patron
(rakish, whisker-flecked big mouth)
lifted a forefinger at beer-bellied
bartender bitching back, soon a real
fight, violence in quiet midnight,
I, scared, got you out of there

but you had to dance, you said,
had to dance so we paved Plateau, tense steps,
found nothing, you started crying & stamping
your feet like a child, I grabbed you & dragged
you back to our room you stripped, curled
into fetal position, beat your fists against
the mattress, in this way you danced
through the night, dozed & woke ready for more—

#564

in your “not-I”
saying is sex
phonemes go
fricatives fill
in space for “I”
it’s all I said
(was I saying
anything red
for yr blood in
you at all for
being me?)

#565

Battle for deliverance,
struggle for salvation,
Christ’s passion condensed
into ten fluid seconds,
sections of flesh leaving,
sense of “Geist” overhead.
Yet you’ve shrunk before
Romance into “post-
everything entropy,” so
even the love of one’s
life becomes another show,
rigged like a government’s
actions, glommed onto
deadly ennui. Christ.

#567

Oh, to be half in love in New York—
moments of almost caress in Union Square,
almost embrace in Alphabet City,
almost consummation on Brooklyn F Train—
remembering confessions at Fez,
Lafayette Place, eruptions of late-night
mania on Broadway, lusts at
Ludlow Street's Living Room,
I wonder what half of us could've
fallen— now, I'm half at ease
w/ memories of half a love,
half lived in livid, lurid Times
Square, also smog-red Hudson
sunsets spent on half-lit banks,
hand-in-hand, hoping for an omen
from doldrums of a half-dead city—

#571

Of course, there had to be
a pretty nurse— this one was
pale blonde, thin, always in
jeans, fat iron cross affixed
to breast-heavy chest. I
couldn't ignore eye-teeth
that made her look like a
vampire. In my pill-popped
dementia, I saw her kneel
beside my bed, swill blood
from my neck, nourish
herself on my sickness.
In swoons, a Christian
vampire seems no weirder
than enforced Twister,
watched Monopoly, or
face-painting forty-year-olds:
she fit right in. That's the bin.

#572

On the bus to fifth
grade, eleven years
old, I couldn't breathe,
they had to call an
ambulance, put me
on oxygen. My father
arrived, shaking and
crying; "First my mother,
now my son." I loved
him so much, it didn't
seem strange that, upon
leaving the hospital,
he returned me to school
in time for math class.

#562

I see you foraging through
weeds in a field; it's spring,
air streaked green. I'm with
you in the field: I'm mud, or
grass, I'm beneath your nails,
held fast. Bark flakes off me.
You pass on, satisfied. Branches
sway, flecked by tongues—
look at my garden's sprawl;
do you see me here, or in the air?

#577

You can only transcribe by dying,
the things you transcribe are dying,

the way you transcribe is dying
by the time you transcribe,

so if you must transcribe,
you must die, or die trying

#1547

this is
what
words
amount
to—
festivals
of ash,
collapsed
into urns,
held
up by
timid folk
for the
bold to
scatter.

#2042

If you attempt to
create something
solid from language,
all the million
harrows of your
inadequacy must
pursue you, what's
solid is harrowing—

past your control.
As for I, you had
better sacrifice the
whole construct,
complexities & all,
as it is all evanescent,

and circuits back to
language show you
all the magic
prophecies of non-
existence you not
only fulfill, but harrow—

#2090

I'm, I wanted to tell her,
that last bit of Russia you
just can't conquer— so,
as you retreat for the last
time, with knowledge that
the war is turning in my
favor, I sigh that humanity
has to be what it is— a little
extra strychnine in my morning
coffee, to settle me down—

#1300

On the trip I had one mind,
everyone else had twelve or
more, I maintained weight,
sat around doing nothing as I
wandered a baffling universe
of locked-in zeroes spinning
all around the two talismans
that gave the apartment its
currents, Jimmy the Face,
Martha the Mask, and they
slayed all my enemies, countless
piles of shit, while fame gave
me bark to shave off and I
complained of mirrored graves—

#1913

You watch, as in slow motion glass-
hewn objects crash to the ground, as
streams back and forth confirm, once
again, you've cracked into a slug-pile
of heartless psychopaths—I stand
aside, jaundiced, wearing my own
glasses, knowing blown glass to be
how human interstices are knit, words
to be an absolute sky of glass, and here
I am, speaking to you in transparencies—

#1176

Your guts tell you when
something's wrong— here
I am at war in darkness—
no moss over me, no
camouflage— I lean forward—
but oh the degenerate trenches,
so very boring, passion kept
to a minimum, fires aglow
never, and my guts fear
the soulless twerps, jealous
that I might be brought low
by some version of cripple's
wisdom— Conshohocken—

#154

I'm not blind or slimy, she told
him, you're just an asshole with
unrealistic expectations. Summer
outside: black and white buildings,
covered in sweat. The picture evens
out (roughly) to brown. She swoons
at the idea of touching. I'm done
with her, he tells himself, strained
to keep his hands off el primo real
estate. But the parents-built picket
fence is stuck up his ass. Someday
he'll jounce it out, impale her on it—
right through the heart. I wonder, she
chimes blithely, if you can define slime?

#2104

If I don't have a lot of nerve,
somebody does— trying, in
unspeakably unspeakable times,
to speak the unspeakable—

rain falls on Fayette Street at
dawn, I'm having half a nervous
breakdown, on an acid trip,
pinning branches to the sky—

Many thanks to the editors of the journals who published these poems; thanks, also, to Susan Wallack, Matt Stevenson, Temple University for providing me with the Fellowship that gave me the time to begin this manuscript, and to the City of Brotherly Love, and the city of Conshohocken, for providing key inspiration.

